February Ambassador of the Month – Zatomas!

Community Miss AshesX Feb 2, 2021

It’s February and we’d like to announce the newest Community Champion and Ambassador of the Month, Zatomas! Hailing from Italy, Zatomas’ contributions to the community have not gone unnoticed. Let’s all give a round of applause and a big congratulations to a deserving Ambassador!

Zatomas is an advocate for speaking out against the stigma that video games influence children in a negative way. She focuses on the topic of “playing with kids” and shares her passion about it with online content,

discussions, and talking at events. To her, a healthy community is a place where you can feel safe and comfortable. This is true for everyone, kids included.

When Zatomas was a child, she was not allowed to have a console because her parents feared that she would spend all her time gaming. After getting a PC, she showed them that she was responsible enough to manage her time between gaming and other priorities such as schoolwork. Now being a parent herself, she sees the struggle that other parents go through when they are not able to properly teach their kids how to play.

“I’m 38 and very often I can see people taking for granted that since my generation grew up with games everybody knows how to handle gaming. This is totally wrong. It’s like saying that since everybody now uses social media they are all experts of social media strategy.”

She is often asked “how do I stop my kids from playing?” and “do I give them limits?” and that is when she takes the opportunity to share her knowledge on gaming with children.

Zatomas believes that gamers can support each other, and that’s why online communities positively impact people’s lives. To her, sharing your gaming experiences is a way to make your emotions towards that game reside longer and this is beneficial to your wellbeing.

“A fellow gamer is, above all, your fellow. Someone who is there for you, who laughs with you, wins and loses with you. This plays a relevant role in our lives, especially now that we are far apart due to pandemic breakout. Online communities have a positive impact when they create real connections.”

Hear more from Zatomas below:

How did gaming become one of your passions?

I recall three moments that changed my story with games:

The first one was at a friend's house, where I discovered the joy of hunting ducks and playing with friends.

The second one was completing the original *Prince of Persia* on my first PC: the beginning of a love story both with gaming and technology that defined the path I took as a grown up player and professional.

Third, was the first time I played on a Xbox. The game was *Halo*, the chance a workshop almost no one wanted to attend at the university. It was about how crafting stories and personal experiences through gaming. 90% of my colleagues decided it was "stupid", the few of us who saw something valuable in it had the chance to meet Masterchief. Since then, to me, Xbox has always been a synonym of wonder and friendship.

Zatomas describes what parents can do to teach their kids about gaming:

The very first step must always be "play *with* your kids": guide them, show them how to play, how to accept failure when they do not win, how to understand when it is time to stop. I really love the time I spend playing with them!

Second, parents are usually not familiar with "profiles". Xbox [did] an amazing job from this point of view. I could spend hours repeating the steps to properly set up a limited account for kids and how to use the Xbox Family Settings mobile app. It is my call as [an] Xbox Ambassador.

Third, instead of setting limits, set expectations. Too often I hear parents saying “I know that game is not suitable for her/his age but all of her/his friends play it!”. Well, so what? Games are intense experiences – respect the rating system. And when in doubt, play the games with your kids.

Finally, give the right example. I never play games in front of my children that are not fine for their age.

What brought you to the Xbox Ambassadors program and what makes you stay?

I discovered it when I was waiting for my turn to try *Forza Horizon* at the Milan Games Week in 2018. Fun fact: while I found out about the program on Twitter, a few meters away the Italian ambassadors were giving info on it… and I didn’t see them! Less than one month later, after getting in touch online, we met in person at the first ever Italian Xbox Fan Fest (we also published a blog post about it on the Xbox Ambassadors community: **check it out**!).

Since then, I met amazing friends in the community and that’s what makes me stay: being part of a healthy community, inspiring others and being inspired by the “make gaming fun for everyone” motto is an exciting and motivating way to live gaming every day.

At that point, gaming is much more than playing. It’s all about making an impact.

How do you stay involved in the program and the community?

Aside from seasonal activities and missions, the **Game Club** is a great opportunity to discover new games and find new friends.

Plus, I make the pledge “real” in everyday interactions with other players, especially online. As an Xbox Ambassador I think that giving positive examples – e.g. when it comes about gaming discussions – can inspire others.

I am particularly active on twitter, where I like to spread the word about the importance of making gaming fun for everyone, promote responsible playing with kids and always proving with my example that gamers are gamers. No matter the game, the console used or the age and gender.

How do you think your professional career has contributed to your involvement with the community?

Well, when I learnt about the program I was in Milan at the Milan Games Week for work (digital marketing consultant at that time) so somehow the two things are related. But now I often find myself thinking that the job I do – Product Manager for a software company – is strongly influenced by the fact that I am a gamer. Gaming helps me training my problem-solving and team collaboration skills, as well as adopt a strategic thinking approach and understand different point of views (especially since I am a huge fan of RPGs!): all soft skills that are key in my job!

You’re involved in a lot of things outside of the program. Tell us about some of your activities!

Like every gamer, I live many lives at a time. I am a Product Manager and a product nerd: I love creating products – software specifically – people love, and that means also that I like to test tech stuff. So you often find me trying this or that other gadget or software. I am a wannabe photographer, so if you find me in the wild, it’ll be while taking pics, especially portraits. And I love travelling: I do it mainly for work, but even in those cases I try to find time to explore. It may be because I was born on an island – Sicily – so sailing away and never stop exploring are in my DNA. Oh, and of course, if you are looking for me, I will most probably find me by the sea.

Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

Gamers are gamers. Never forget about that.

Games make us all the same: behind that screen there is a gamer. I don't care about the gender, I don't care about disability, race and all those things people who love divisions usually mention. I am playing with you. We are pirates together, we are on the war field together, we are here to play. And when we all play, we all have fun.

What message do you have for the XA community?

I got something to say to all the aspiring Xbox Ambassadors out there: just do it.

Sometimes people ask me "can I be an Xbox Ambassador if I never stream? Do I have to help people in the forums? Can I be an Ambassador even if my gamerscore is below X?"

Folks, this is not a race. As long as you want to meet great friends, take part in amazing missions and spend time on the forum, on Discord and on Twitter – just to mention some of the channels where you will find us – with other Xbox Ambassadors, please join.

Only the pledge will tell you if you are a good gamer fitting in the Ambassador role or not.